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PLAY SUITS FOR WINTER



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CHILDREN'S clothing must be comfortable. All their garments, especially play suits, should permit freedom and natural movement of the body. Now that outside exercise is being emphasized more and more, clothes which will keep the youngster warm on a cold day and still allow freedom in play are in great demand. The weight of these

garments must be as light as possible, because too heavy clothing does not encourage play and may cause posture defects. The choice of a fabric is very important in determining the actual weight of the garment, but the selection of a design which will allow free movement and an even distribution of weight is equally necessary.

Selection of Play-Suit Fabrics

The warmth of a fabric depends on weave and finish quite as much as on weight. The most desirable fabrics are warm, light in weight, soft, pliable, moisture-proof, and closely woven or knitted. Few materials completely meet all these requirements, but there are many that measure up in a satisfactory way. A soft, closely woven, fuzzy cloth may be much warmer than a harsh, smooth, leathery fabric. Knitted materials and sweater suits are elastic and fit snugly but are less warm than woven ones because the stitches are far apart and the wind can blow through.

For many years wool fabrics were considered the only ones that would really hold in heat. Recently, however, cotton materials that compare favorably with the wools, are appearing on the market. Although they may not replace wool entirely, in some cases they may be used to advantage.

When children play out of doors they must be kept dry. Cloth may be woven so tightly that it sheds moisture or it may be treated so that it will turn off water and slushy snow.

Children love bright colors, and their delight in them can be used to advantage when selecting outside garments. Motorists often fail to see children as they dart unexpectedly across the street because the usual colors for their outside wraps, such as gray, tan, brown, navy blue, and black, blend in with the background; whereas bright blue or green, red, and orange would provide a "safety zone" around the youngster.

One-Piece Suits are Practical

In these days when the self-help idea is being stressed in children's clothing, the 1-piece play suit is in greater favor than the older 2-piece style. Even the well designed 2-piece knitted suit shown in Figure 1 would present some difficulty to this 3-year-old if she tried to adjust it entirely by herself. The leggings have a back and front not always easily recognized by the small child and the slip-over sweater is hard to pull on so that the right arm gets into the right sleeve and not out through the neck. Also since the child's abdomen must be kept warm, the garments must overlap or stay together at the waistline. As the child exercises, each part is inclined to slip apart and allow cold air, snow, or rain to reach the body. Knitted, elastic, or fabric bands and draw strings are the usual methods of holding the blouse and leggings in place but they are more or less unsatisfactory when the child romps and climbs. Of these, the knitted band is the most desirable because it provides warmth, is nonrestricting, and goes back into place after stretching.

Children dressed comfortably for early morning play on chilly days often become much too warm long before noon as the temperature rises and they are more active. A combination of garments, such as is shown in Figure 2, was designed with this in mind. The inner suit is made from a lightweight wool material. A smoothly finished cotton fabric was selected for the outer suit. This collects dirt less readily and is more easily cleaned than the wool cloth. It may or may not be shower proofed. Either of these suits may be worn alone but when worn together they furnish the necessary warmth for low temperatures. By varying the types of fabrics used, this combination will provide comfort for active children in most kinds of weather and climate.



FIG. 1—A satisfactory style when a 2-piece knitted design is desired



FIG. 2—Two suits are convenient for changeable climates

late buttons and buttonholes or buttons and loops as well as any other fastening. Snaps and hooks mash down easily and then are difficult to use. A button three-fourths to seven-eighths of an inch in diameter is large enough for the child to hold while putting it through the buttonhole or loop, and it is a good size for children's garments. Whether buttonholes are vertical or horizontal seems to make little difference to the child as far as fastening them is concerned; consequently they should be placed so that pull comes on the end rather than on the side of the slit.

Sometimes loops of heavy silk or elastic cord make a more satisfactory fastening for a play suit than the usual buttonhole, especially if the material is thick and the buttonholes are stiff. A child can put a button through a loop as easily, or in some cases more easily, than he can through a buttonhole.

Front Openings Encourage Self-Help

A child's desire to do things for himself is shown almost as soon and as emphatically as the wish to get his own way. However, he can not learn self-help effectively without assistance. Systematic and intelligent guidance during early childhood strengthens his developing self-confidence and tends to make him a self-dependent individual.

Clothing offers one of the best opportunities for such training, since most children take much interest in their clothes and like to put them on alone. Mothers can stimulate that interest if they exercise good judgment when selecting their children's garments. Front openings, simply arranged without complicated plackets, are the easiest for small youngsters to handle.

From the attempts so far to find out the most desirable type of placket fastener for small inexperienced fingers, it seems that children $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 years of age can manipu-



FIG. 3—A child of 3 can fasten his own buttons

Sliding fasteners, which may be purchased in department stores, are used for placket closings on some of the newer styles of children's outdoor garments. (Fig. 5.) This type of fastener is comparatively easy to insert and closes the placket more securely and tightly than any other kind.

Not only are front openings essential in the body of the suit, but they are highly desirable in the leggings as well. When at play, a little child often sits with one foot under him, and sand, dirt, or snow can then sift in through a side opening. Furthermore, a small child can reach a closing on the top of his leg much more easily than he can twist himself into a knot trying to operate a leg placket on the side. Since there must be a seam or dart on top of the foot and leg if the leggings are to fit smoothly

around the ankle, the placket can be made in the front equally as well as in the side seam.

Although drop-seat plackets can not be in the front, much can be done to make the child's attempts at self-dependence more efficient. The belt across the back may be finished with tab extensions for the buttonholes, and the side buttons can then be placed an inch in front of the seams. Sliding fasteners inserted in the seams are also convenient. Little folk find that buttons in the back are troublesome because they are out of sight and difficult to reach.

Tight Restricting Bands Hamper Play

As a rule, the use of elastic bands in children's clothing is to be avoided. When in place, such bands may permit free circulation and unrestricted body movement, but as their location changes during the child's play, they may become so uncomfortable



FIG. 4—Openings in leg bands insure a close fit



FIG. 5—A child pulls side fastenings to the front

around the waist, wrists, or legs that he tends to become an onlooker rather than a romping, jumping participator in the games.

Sleeves in children's play suits must be sufficiently large to assure comfort. A shirt type of sleeve is more satisfactory than one with a decidedly shaped cap. The fullness around the hand, which comes in the almost straight shirt sleeve, can be removed by a box pleat laid in the sleeve after the lower edge has been finished. This pleat should come on the back of the arm in line with the elbow, and should be deep enough to make the sleeve fit comfortably around the child's wrist but still slip over his hand. The back half of the pleat may be sewed securely in place, and the front half may be held by a loop of fabric, cord, or elastic sewed on the fold and fastened over a button. (Fig. 3.) Such a design allows fullness through the elbow, does away with the troublesome cuff, and requires only one button. Also the size of the sleeve at the hand can be altered quickly and easily by just moving the button.

By a similar method the extra fullness around the ankle may be removed. If the legs seem much too large around the lower edge, a part of this bulk may be taken out by a dart on the top of the leg. Then a pleat is laid so that the underneath fold comes on the dart seam. A loop sewed on to the top fold of the pleat fastens over a button and holds the pleat in place just as at the wrist. (Fig. 3.) The remainder of the fullness is adjusted by a short piece of elastic extending around the back of the leg. The legs of play suits, finished in this way, have the advantage of requiring only one button, although they do give more bulk around the ankle.

Knitting bands around the ankles and wrists is another practical way of confining the fullness in the sleeves and legs of the suit. (Fig. 4.) These fit snugly, are warm and nonrestricting, and keep out the cold air and snow. Ready-made suits are often finished in this manner, and anklets and wristbands can be easily and quickly knit on to homemade garments. They are more satisfactory if small needles and sweater yarn are used. The yarn may be of a contrasting color, but the effect is generally more pleasing if it matches the fabric in color and the contrast is one of texture.



FIG. 6—An Eskimo hood provides warmth in zero weather

A child should have pockets in every garment, whether it be a dress, a suit, or an outside wrap. They give a place to stow away "valuable" string, pebbles, and small toys as well as a place to tuck the handkerchief. Three-year-olds soon learn to use a handkerchief if it is in a convenient place, but if it is crammed down in the mitten or up the sleeve, tied through a buttonhole, or put in the hat crown, they will not take the time or trouble to hunt it. Pockets placed near the waistline and slanted across the top are easiest for the child to reach. (Figs. 2 and 7.)

There is little or no danger to health from playing outdoors on a rainy day if the body is kept warm. Rain suits of waterproof material should furnish adequate protection from rain and be equally desirable for playing in the snow. Many a child has yearned for a rain suit just like a playmate's and then been bitterly disappointed to find that it was not comfortable. On rainy spring days the hood on the little girl's rain cape is much too warm but it is not detachable. Moreover, often it is so short from the crown of the head to the neckline that it pulls the cape up until it is too tight in the neck. Consequently the hood is thrown back most of the time. The long, circular cape also flaps in the wind, the slits for the arms are easily torn, and all in all this is far from an ideal rain outfit. The small boy's raincoat is little better. The big sleeves dip in the mud or scoop up snow, the long coat tails wreck his sand houses or stone bridges, and his belt is always lost.

These garments serve only as protection against water and do not add materially to the child's warmth. Extra outdoor clothing has to be worn under them and the child is so bundled up that he can not play freely. In Figure 9 a new, more practical design for rain suits is shown. This outfit is made from a showerproofed, woolen material which will keep the child warm as well as dry. The upper part of the back laps down over the drop seat so that moisture is turned off and does not run down inside the suit. Tab extensions, which finish the simulated belt, extend toward the front about 3 inches, and carry the side buttonholes, where they can be reached by the child. Two



FIG. 7—Pockets add joy and interest to the suit

side-center buttons, in place of the usual one in the middle, divide the pull so that it comes from the shoulders rather than from the neck and crotch, and these fastenings also are easily seen and reached. The leatherette reinforcements on the knees, elbows, and seat make the suit more masculine and give extra protection. For the little girl, pieces of the same material as the suit would be less conspicuous



FIG. 8—A hat of the same material completes this rain outfit

and would still reinforce against hard wear.

In Fig. 8 the trimming strip on the front covers a sliding fastener and thus lessens the chances of snow and rain getting in through this opening. Even the placket facings in the leggings can be planned so as to exclude moisture. They are shaped pieces set in like godets, and when the loops are fastened, the closing resembles a pleat.



FIG. 9—Leatherette trimmings on this suit prolong its life

